The New Year 1939/40
By Joseph Goebbels

It is harder for me than it was in years past to recall the old year for my listeners. Certainly there is no lack of material. To the contrary, the year 1939 was so dramatic and filled with historical splendors that one could fill a library writing about them. One hardly knows where to begin. Much that happened in the past year already seems as if it happened years or even decades ago. It was a year burned into the book of history. It will surely give the historians enough material to write about for decades to come. They will explain the events and look into the motives and drives of the central characters. They will attempt to explain all that moved us so deeply, all that we have done, and they will probably fall short in the attempt. Whether friend or foe, supporter or opponent, all will have to admit that this was a great and eventful year, a year in which history was made, in which the face of Europe changed, in which the map took new form. More than that, our people began to restore its national life in 1939, beginning a great effort finally to throw off the chains of constraint and slavery and to once again take our place as a great power after our deep fall [after 1918].

When the diligent historians investigate this year, the worries and difficulties we all had will be forgotten; the sacrifices will appear in a milder and more becoming light, the tears shed will be concealed and the blood that has been shed will be the cement that forever holds our Reich together. From the beginning, it was clear to everyone who could not only read history, but also experience it, that this year would deeply affect the fate of Germany and the European peoples. True, the first two months were relatively uneventful, but he who saw clearly knew it was only the calm before the storm. Everyone felt that it would be a year of important decisions.

On 13 February the ethnic Germans in Bohemia and Moravia made it clear that their legal, economic, and social situation in the former Czechoslovakia had not become better since the solution of the Sudeten problem, but had in fact worsened. On 22 February, the Slovakians called for independence. At the beginning of March, there were severe persecutions of Germans in Prague, Brünn, and other cities in Bohemia and Moravia. On 8 March, the Carpathian-Ukrainian government in Prague protested against the appointment of a Czech general as Carpathian-Ukrainian interior minister. On 10 March, the Czech government deposed the Slovakian government and

the persecution of Germans in Bohemia and Moravia intensified. It was clear that the time had come to settle the problems in these areas, which had been cultivated by Germans for centuries. On 13 March, the Slovakian leader Tiso visited the Führer, and on 14 March, the Czech President Dr. Hacha placed the fate of Bohemia and Moravia in the hands of the Führer. The goddess of history looked down to earth. German troops entered Bohemia and Moravia, and with breathless excitement the German people and the whole world saw the Führer take up residence in the castle of Prague. Slovakia declared independence on the same day, and the day after the Führer issued his historical decree establishing the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia.
The Slovakians put themselves under the protection of the Reich.

The issue of Bohemia and Moravia found its final historic solution. On 22 March, the Memel District returned to the Reich. Parallel to these developments, the Polish question was intensifying. As early as 5 January, the Führer received the Polish Foreign Minister Beck at the Obersalzberg. He reminded him of Danzig's German character and made suggestions for improving German-Polish relations. These proposals fell on deaf Polish ears. After the reactions from London and Paris to these developments, one knew why.

On 31 March, soon after the establishment of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, London hate papers printed lies about German troops gathering on the Polish border. Chamberlain reported to the House of Commons on English-Polish negotiations, and gave a formal declaration of British support to Poland. The London warmongering clique thus gave Warsaw the freedom to act, in the secret wish that Warsaw would begin the conflict that the London plutocrats needed in order to begin their long desired and carefully prepared military measures against the Reich.
The government in Warsaw understood. Beginning in April, terror and persecution of ethnic Germans climbed beyond the previous normal and tolerable level. On 13 April, severe anti-German persecutions occurred on the Danzig border. The terrorist attacks on Germans rose throughout Poland after Germany began its efforts to improve relations. German consulates reported countless persecutions every day to Berlin.

On 8 May, 300 ethnic Germans were expelled from Neutomischel County. The German theater was closed in Bromberg on 9 May. Two Germans were killed by Poles in Lodsch on 15 May. A Danzig citizen was killed by Poles in Kalthof on 21 May.

One can understand this only after learning that on 15 May the Polish War Minister Kasprzycki was in Paris for secret talks, and that the German representative in Warsaw reported to Berlin on 8 May that maps were being distributed in Polish cities that showed the border moved into German territory past Beuthen, Oppeln, Gleiwitz, Breslau, Stettin, and Kolberg.
The situation in Danzig intensified under Polish pressure. On 15 June, the German ambassador lodged an official protest against insults and slanders against the Führer. Border incidents and other problems increased through June and July. On 4 August, the Polish government made an insolent and provocative ultimatum against rumors of alleged resistance against Polish customs officials.

Danzig rejected the ultimatum on 7 August. The German government expressed its concern to the Polish representative on 9 August. Poland apparently felt itself under England's protection, and gave an unsatisfactory reply on 10 August. On 18 August, the SS Home Defense was mobilized to protect the German city of Danzig. Things were in motion. English plutocracy attempted to wash its hands of the situation and claim innocence, seeking to build a moral alibi for the war it wanted. But even a blind man could see what England was doing.

On 24 August, the customs negotiations between Danzig and Poland ended because of Polish intransigence. Poland called up further reserves and intensified its provocations. On 25 August, Poland further intensified the situation by firing on a German plane with a Reich Secretary on board on international airspace. The reaction of the London warmongering clique to the events they had encouraged was clear; on 25 August, they demonstratively signed a British-Polish alliance. The day after, a million and a half Poles were under arms.

The Führer spoke to the German Reichstag on 27 August. He announced that he wanted to solve three problems: Danzig, the Corridor, and improving Germany’s relations with Poland in a way that would guarantee peaceful cooperation. Lively diplomatic efforts between Berlin, Rome, London, and Paris occurred between 28 and 31 August. The Führer yet again attempted a peaceful solution by announcing that the German government was expecting a Polish emissary. Poland replied by provocatively announcing general mobilization on 30 August. Polish radio on 31 August declared German proposals to solve the existing problems unacceptable. German consulates reported 55 instances between 25 and 31 August of the most serious Polish

attacks on ethnic Germans. Polish troops committed a series of serious border violations on 31 August.

The result was that German troops marched into Poland on 1 September. The Führer spoke to the Reichstag and announced that force would be met with force. The same day, Danzig proclaimed its union with the Reich. The following lightning campaign in Poland was unique in all of history. On 2 September, the Jablunka Pass was taken. The Polish army in the Corridor was destroyed on 4 August. Bromberg was captured on 6 September. The Westernplatte fell on 7 September. Lodsch was captured on 10 September. The blockade of Radom was completed on 12 September. 52,000 Poles laid down their weapons. Posen, Thorn, Gnesen, and Hohensalza were captured on 13 September. Gdingen fell into German hands on 15 September. Brest-Litovsk fell on 17 September. The blockade of Weichselbogen um Kunto was completed successfully on 18 September.

170,000 Polish prisoners marched into captivity. Warsaw capitulated on 27 September. Modlin fell two days later. The Polish army was defeated and destroyed. Over 700,000 Poles were captured. The booty was enormous. Over a half million guns, 16,000 machine guns, 32,000 artillery pieces and over 3 3/4 million rounds of artillery munitions fell into our hands. The London warmongering clique did not lift a finger to support its Polish ally. England saw the solution of the German-Polish problem only as an excuse to begin the long-desired battle with the German people.

The English warmongers had achieved their first goal. Ever since the Munich Agreement, London had more and more been winning the upper hand. They increasingly influenced the governments in London and Paris. The year 1939 was increasingly characterized by Germany’s blockade. London plutocracy used the extremely tense situation to prepare war against Germany. Chamberlain and Halifax were in Paris on 10 January.

Chamberlain told the House of Commons on 5 February that the full forces of the Empire were ready to assist France. On 18 March, Britain and France protested the establishment of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. War was avoided only because France and England were not ready for it. But as the Protectorate was established, the anti-German press campaign in London and Paris reached its first peak. At the same time, the London warmongering clique spread alarming rumors to conceal the true situation.

A lying report on 19 March claimed that Germany had given Romania an ultimatum. The Norwegian Foreign Minister denied reports from Paris about alleged German threats against the Nordic states on 21 March. On 24 March, England guaranteed the security of Holland, Belgium, Switzerland and the Eastern states. Not a day passed in which the English press did not predict some sort of German attack or spread lies about German threats against the smaller states.

Paris played the same tune. The French government passed emergency measures to strengthen the navy on 28 March. The English Chief of Staff Gort visited France. The English-French warmongering clique now made a desperate attempt to bring Russia into the alliance against Germany. The English Commerce Minister Hudson traveled to Moscow on 28 March. London newspapers printed lies on 31 March that German troops were gathering on the Polish border. The same day, Chamberlain told the House of Commons that England would stand by Poland and Romania.

The Führer on the following day warned the English in a speech at Wilhelmshaven. On 5 April, Lord Stanhope said that the air forces of the English fleet were on alert. London established a munitions ministry on 20 April, in case of necessity. The Führer replied to these warmongering actions on the part of English plutocracy in a speech to the German Reichstag on 28 April. He declared the provisions of the German-English naval accord null and void, and also the German-Polish agreement of 1934.

A day before, England had introduced the draft, and negotiations between England, France, and Russia began on 14 June in Moscow. London's goal was to organize an attack on Germany from both East and West.
At the same time, English propaganda made the foolish attempt to confuse the German people by leaflets, radio, and the press, the same thing they had so often done in the past. The plans failed. The German people stood firmly and unanimously behind the Führer. The English attempt to bring Russia into its blockade campaign collapsed. The British Ambassador returned from London to Berlin on 25 August. The Führer presented him with a generous proposal for a lasting understanding between Germany and England.

The English government did not intend to respond to this constructive proposal. Their answer came on 28 August. England claimed that it had received assurances from the Polish government that it would negotiate with the Reich government. The Führer replied to the English government on 29

August that the Reich government was ready to accept the English proposal and expected the Polish negotiator on Wednesday, 30 August. On the evening of 30 August and despite the absence of the Polish delegate, the Reich Foreign Minister gave the English Ambassador in Berlin a sixteen-point proposal to resolve the questions of Danzig, the Corridor, and German-Polish minority issues. Poland replied with force, and the Führer had no alternative but to answer force with force.

Paris and London demanded the withdrawal of German troops from Poland on 1 September. The German Reich government rejected the demand. Mussolini's attempts to resolve the situation on 2 September collapsed because of England's stance. On 3 September, London and Paris gave Germany an ultimatum, and declared war against the Reich soon after. Now the mask fell from the faces of the London warmongering clique. When the government was shuffled on 3 September, leading members of the warmongering clique joined the cabinet. Churchill and Eden became official inciters of British war policy.

The war of the Western powers against the Reich had begun. The Führer's foreign policy had succeeded in destroying Britain's blockade. England and France were alone against Germany. The Reich faced a new challenge. All necessary internal measures had been taken to ensure a victorious conclusion to the war. On 28 August, rationing of food and consumer items was introduced. A Ministry for Defense was established on 30 August.

Comprehensive economic measures were announced on 1 September, and a Reich Defense Commission with extensive powers was established on 5 September. Measures to guarantee the necessities of life for dependents of soldiers were implemented on 20 October. As early as 6 November, we could increase food rations. On 16 November, clothing rationing was introduced, and on 20 November better rations for those working at night or in demanding occupations. The front and the homeland celebrated Christmas as a firm and unshakable community. The Führer was with his troops at the West Wall to celebrate Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. The year 1939 ended with the German people holding to an unshakable confidence in victory.

Another year is behind us, the proudest and most important year of the National Socialist regime. We see its passing with honor and respect. It was a German year in Europe's history. We honor the sacrifices that the entire

German people have made in this year. Some were affected more than others. We have done all we could to see that the burdens are fairly shared. This war involves the whole people. It is a war for our national existence. It has not yet seen its full extent on every front. No one can doubt that the warmongering cliques in London and Paris want to stifle Germany, to destroy the German people. They admit that openly today. They reserve their sanctimonious phrases about defeating Hitlerism, but not the German people, only for the stupid. We know what they are doing from experience, and a child once burned is more cautious the second time. No one in Germany listens to them. They want to attack the Führer through Hitlerism, the Reich through Hitlerism, and the German people through the Reich. All the Führer's attempts at peace bore no fruit with them.

We 90 million in the Reich stand in the way of their brutal plans for world domination. They hate our people because it is decent, brave, industrious, hardworking, and intelligent. They hate our views, our social policies, and our accomplishments. They hate us as a Reich and as a community. They have forced us into a struggle for life and death. We will defend ourselves accordingly. All is clear between us and our enemies. All Germans know what we are doing, and the entire German people are filled with fanatical resolve. There is no comparison here to the World War. Germany today is economically, politically, militarily, and spiritually ready to respond to the attack of the enemy.

It would be a mistake to predict what will happen in the New Year. That is all in the future. One thing is clear: It will be a hard year, and we must be ready for it. Victory will not fall into our laps. We must earn it, and not only at the front, but at home as well. Everyone has to work and fight for it. Therefore, in this hour as we bid farewell to a great year and enter a new one, the homeland greets the front. We greet soldiers in bunkers and the front lines, at airbases and in the navy. The homeland and the front join in a common greeting to the Führer. May a gracious fate keep him healthy and strong; then we will look with assurance into the future. Today more than ever he is Germany, the faith of our people, and the certainty of its future. We bow in honor before the great sacrifices of our people. The sacrifices of the past and those yet to come must not be in vain. We owe that to the Reich and its future.